



have love, will travel by everybreatheverymove

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Summary: Nothing is going to stop him from seeing her — his girl with the gentle smile and unruly curls. He's always going to return home to her; or at least, for as long as it takes for them to build a home together. ("Long distance" prompt for Mileven week.)

have love, will travel

What in this world keeps us from falling apart? (1989)

The living room is submerged in darkness, and it's well past one in the morning so El is fairly certain everyone in the house is already asleep. Nevertheless, she quickly whips around to press the tip of her index finger up against Mike's lips.

Her boyfriend wraps his hand around her wrist then, pulling her hand down to her side. He leans down to kiss her on the lips, his own hands cupping the sides of her face to silence them both. El gasps into the kiss, pressing her palms flat against his chest in surprise.

(He's not sure what he's going to do when he can't do *this* every day.)

(He's gonna be miles away in Chicago with nobody but Dustin and people he's never met keeping him company.)

(And she's gonna be *here* until she decides that she wants out of life. Mike can only hope it includes him.)

Pulling away with a deep breath, Mike furrows his brows, "I love you."

"I know you do," El voices, and she nuzzles into the crook of his neck then, making his skin turn rose from the softness, the ticklishness of her hair, "I love you, too."

The black-haired boy hums, "And I'll see you tomorrow."

Beaming smile on her face, El simply leans up to press a fleeting kiss to his cheek, lips puckering to leave a trace of her glossy chapstick on Mike's skin. She slides her hands down his arms, mindlessly pulling on the material of his sweater. "Promise?"

The boy nods, and he glances down between them with the lowest of whispers, "Always."

"Okay," El drops his hands, and she bites her bottom lip with a final look up at him as he makes to leave the house, sneakers squishing in

the water puddles on the driveway where he's parked.

Willing herself to bid him goodnight and *finally* turn in for the night, El pulls the latch over the door as quietly as she can once its shut so as to not wake anybody. She spins around on her heels, back pressing up against the wooden door as a dreamy sigh escapes passed her lips.

"Kid."

Eyes flying open, El gasps at the sight of her father sat at the foot of the staircase, arms folded over his chest authoritatively.

"Where the hell have you been?" Hopper pushes up on his legs to stand, palms flat against his knees. He shuffles bare feet along the wooden floorboards, a tired look in his eye. "It's two o'clock in the goddamn morning," he says, warning.

"I was out."

(There she goes again. Dodging his questions.)

Hopper groans, "With your friends?"

El just stares up at him, doe-eyed and calm and more confident than he'd be if he were in her place, "with Mike."

"And it couldn't wait until tomorrow?"

The girl straightens her back up against the door then, face the picture of innocence, "I don't *believe* so," she tells him, enunciating her words as though she's trying to prove a point.

"And what were you and Wheeler doing?"

She's eighteen, and he's not a total idiot. Immediately, he regrets his question.

"Stuff."

(Great.)

"But Mike is leaving soon," El tells him as though that's all the

explanation he needs. And it *is*, but that doesn't mean Hopper is going to let her get away with it so easily. "And I can't kiss him when he's in Chicago, can I?"

Her dad just mumbles something incoherent under his breath, a hand resting on the bannister. "Know your audience, El." She just looks confused now, so Hopper continues, eyes glistening with fatigue. It's not like he'd been awake *all* night waiting up for her, but- "Mike should know better."

El places her hand over her heart then, and she frowns, "It was my idea." She says, remaining chapstick popping as her lips slowly part, "Don't blame Mike."

"So I should blame you?"

"I guess," El walks around him to set her jacket over the back of the sofa, palms flat against her side as she turns around to face him again, "I just wanted to see him."

"That doesn't mean you can just leave the house in the middle of the night, El." Her dad rasps, a single brow raised in concern, "Listen, kid, I know you're sad-"

"I'm not sad," El shrugs, and the slightest scowl is threatening to take over her face now, "He's coming back," she says matter-of-factly, and Hopper is suddenly reminded that these aren't normal, hormone-crazed teenagers he's dealing with. His daughter's intensely loyal, and her boyfriend is no different. Heck, the Wheeler kid is probably twice as headstrong as she is.

With a sigh, Hopper corrects himself, "I *know* he's coming back, I just meant-" A breath, "What I mean, is that you shouldn't be sneaking out of the house like that without telling anyone." Hans flying up to his hips, he rests thick fingers along the waistband of his plaid pyjama pants.

"If I told you," his daughter starts after a beat. She ducks her head, brushing long fringe behind her ears as she looks up at him through her lashes, "then it wouldn't be sneaking out," El blinks, stares, "would it?"

Hopper bites his tongue, trying to force the grin creeping up on his face from erupting and giving him away, "Exactly."

He doesn't have a problem with her venturing out in the middle of the night, not really. Not when she's always accompanied, and not when she's *her*. His main concern is her crawling out of her bedroom window at half-past midnight and waking up the neighbors by climbing down the side of the house like some kind of human spider. Prying eyes are the *last* thing he needs, no matter how much his daughter wants to act like a normal teenager and get into cars with boys so late at night.

"Just tell me next time."

The girl simply nods, shoulders raising as she moves to fold her arms over her chest, "Okay." She purses her lips, eyes blown wide. "Can I go now?"

Scratching his right brow with his pinkie nail, Hopper just rolls his eyes. He shrugs, sighs, and offers a simple "Sure, kid."

All I ever wanted, all I ever needed, is here in my arms. (1990)

It's the nineties and Mike is trying to figure out who he is when he's not surrounded by his friends.

This year, he's the lanky kid who sports a measly moustache and turns up on his girlfriend's doorstep unannounced. Well, his girlfriend's *dad's* doorstep.

"Mike!"

Her arms instinctively fly to wrap around his neck, to pull him into her front. She practically suffocates him with the force of her embrace, which Mike thinks is *amazing* given she's a good foot shorter than him. But then, she's never *not* floored him.

They spoke last night, some seven hours ago, when El was tucked in bed, and Mike had been (secretly) throwing clothes into a duffle bag and planning his drive back down to Indiana. They'd talked about Mike's studies, El's work down at the library, but the part of the

conversation about their friends hasn't lasted long. They saw the other members of the party far more than they saw each other. El had yet to visit him (and Dustin) in their apartment, and Mike hadn't been down to Hawkins since February — when he'd promised he'd spend Valentine's with her, and he had.

The call had only ended because, after spending twenty minutes telling Mike all about the latest book she'd been reading, El had started snoring and Mike had made the pretty reasonable assumption that she'd fallen asleep.

He was supposed to call her later today, but he guesses there won't be any need for *that* now.

Opening his mouth to talk, Mike finds himself lost for words when his girlfriend reaches up to stroke the sides of his face, thumbs along his jawlines as she drags him down into a loving kiss. He melts in her arms, the touch of her skin against his neck shooting goosebumps up Mike's spine.

(He's missed *this*.)

(He's missed *her*.)

(He's missed seeing her every day, and kissing her every day, and knowing that she was always only ten minutes away.)

"What is-" El cuts herself off, and it's only then that Mike realises she's *stopped* kissing him. She has a hand pressed against the bottom half of her own face, fingertips dancing along her cupid's bow in curiosity. Her eyes narrow in on his nose, then flicker down as though she's spotted an abnormality.

Mike feels his cheeks flush when she runs her index finger along her upper lip, nose crinkling in bewilderment. He laughs, low and sheepish and awkward, "Oh, *that*," Mike drops his gaze down to her mouth, watching as she bites her bottom lip as she waits for an explanation, "It was Dustin's idea."

(It definitely *wasn't* Dustin's idea.)

(He distinctly remembers Dustin, with a mouthful of turkey

sandwich, poking him in the cheek and asking, "*Mike, why is there a dead ferret on your face?*")

"I felt it," she says, and he's confused for all of maybe five seconds. Then he remembers that she kissed him and something clearly hadn't felt right.

"You don't like it?"

El runs her fingers along the once-bare skin between his mouth and nose then, attentively staring up his philtrum in wonder. The pad of her thumb curves under his chin and she tilts his head down to get a clearer look at his face, gazing up at him with brown eyes full of inquisitiveness — it's almost as though she's asking '*why?*'

After a moment, she drops her hand to his chest with a soft shake of her head, "Cute," El blinks, and she licks her lips as her attention shifts from his face to his neck. "I like it."

Mike can't help but raise in brow in curiosity when she slips her hand past the neck of his rugby shirt, skin warm against his throbbing pulse, "Yeah?" He swallows a breath, feels the faintest of blushes rise to his cheeks at her touch, "Okay." He can feel the press of her palm against the more sensitive parts of his neck, and his blood flow almost slows to a stop when she rises up on her tiptoes to the corner of his mouth. His hair is no different, and when she tugs on the hair at the base of his skull, Mike just feels peace.

Pulling away after only a second, El full-on wraps her arms around the boy's neck. She throws her right wrist over her left, bracelets and hair-ties almost tangling, and she pulls him closer as her eyes drift to a close. Mike smiles, feeling her eyelashes flutter against his cheeks when she rests her forehead against his temple, breath somehow cool despite the heat radiating off of her.

It's warmer than the last time they saw each other. Instead of dark clouds and the threat of a storm rolling into town, all that surrounds them is the hot, balmy air that usually takes over Hawkins when the sun is out; the kind of temperature that makes your skin sticky and your lips dry if you don't hydrate properly. But there's nothing summery about the way El is clinging to him now, wrapping herself

around his frame, all limbs and damp hair, as though she's seeking warmth on a cold winter's night.

"Mike?"

He hums in response, raising a hand to her hip to hold her against him and keep her close.

"I missed you," she says then, and there's something so candidly pure about the way she says it that Mike blushes — for real this time. His smile broadens into a full-fledged grin, lips parting until just the bottoms of his top teeth are visible, "I missed you, too." He wiggles his eyebrows, "Can I come inside?"

"Does anybody else," the brunette starts, and she lowers her arms from his neck to grab his hands and thread their fingers together, "know you're here?"

"In Hawkins?"

She nods, slow and almost uncertain.

He shakes his head with a quick glance over his shoulder, eyeing his car in the empty driveway, "Not yet. I don't think Dustin told anybody so—"

Suddenly, he's being pulled over the threshold and passed the doorway of the Hopper residence. El flicks her head with a mischievous look in her eye, the door slams shut (and locked), and Mike is *home*.

And when you find me there, you'll search no more. (1991)

It's been exactly fifty-five days since she last saw him.

They'd parted in the driveway that morning; El with an armful of books and Mike with his keys lay abandoned on the concrete right beside the passenger side door of his car. He'd kissed her, crazy and senseless, until she'd almost dropped the pile of romance novels in her arms, hands in her curls and breath caught in his throat because he hadn't been able to help himself.

But she'd caught herself before the books fell, begrudgingly pulling away from her boyfriend with a moan and a 'sorry' as he bent to pick up his keys. She readjusted the lapels of her blouse with her free hand, staring down at her chest with the slightest of frowns, "When are you coming back?"

"Sometime next month," Mike had told her, scratching at the back of his neck as he watched her, "Don't worry, El," he'd slid a hand around her neck then, fingertips creeping past her hairline in a gentle caress, "I'm always gonna come back."

With a smile, she'd blushed, asked, "To me?"

"Always."

It's been fifty-five days since she last saw him. She doesn't want to find him in the Void, to snoop and pry and invade his privacy.

She's just waiting for him to come home.

It's such a gorgeous sight to see you in the middle of the night.
(1992)

"Can you just let me in, please?"

El sits back against her bed cushions, arms folding over her chest as her ankles cross. She wiggles her toes in her cotton socks, watching as the star shapes crease and straighten, "Why?"

Mike pushes his face up against the window then, forehead flat against the glass panel, "I need to talk to you." He mutters something El can't quite make out, and then he's placing his hands against the outside of the window sill and *waiting*.

Mike knows it probably would have been easier to just ring the doorbell, wake the chief up, and cause a scene. But his girlfriend's a late sleeper and, because she still lives with her adoptive father at twenty-one years of age, he's gotta make do.

And if that means climbing up the side of the chief of police's house at one o'clock in the morning because said-girlfriend had been

ignoring him all night, then (*well, shit*) he's going to do it.

"El?" His voice is softer now, as though the chilly, early November air is actually *calming* him. His t-shirt is stuck to his back, his skin sweaty from hoisting himself up a facade and a drainpipe in the middle of the night. He's never been the most physically fit of people — what, with his spindly legs and unfortunate lack of upper body strength — but sneaking into his girl's bedroom well into the dead of night never posed much of a problem back in high school.

(But then, he was never *this* nervous back then.)

"Let me in," Mike's voice almost breaks, fingers sliding down the glass to draw lines in the condensation, "please?"

He hasn't seen her in over a month; probably since he came down that weekend at the end of September for Holly's birthday. But he'd spent most of that time at his mom's new place, trying to help her get settled because lord knows his little sister wasn't going to. And he's been too busy with school and work ever since, too busy trying to sort his life out, to free up a single weekend to visit El.

El, who has been to his apartment a grand total of *three* times over the last three years. Mike knows she's not a fan of travelling into Chicago by herself, not after *that* time.

El, whose father *Mike* has yet to ask for approval. But then, when has Hopper ever denied them anything?

A glass window and some wooden panelling are all that separates them now, but Mike has never felt further away from her. She's right *there* — four feet away, not some couple hundred miles — and he can see her. He can practically *feel* her. She just needs to let him in and hear him out.

With a roll of her eyes, El simply shifts her gaze from her feet to Mike's face, now blurred by the window. She focuses on the frame, watching with narrowed eyes as the lock undoes itself and the window slides up to let him inside.

She's standing now, hands on her hips, fingers splayed out over the

waistband over her pyjama pants. It's a very *Hopper* stance, and Mike can't help but smile at the detail. Hands curled over the ledge then, Mike slips past the gap in the frame, back arching as he hauls himself into the room and onto her floor. Plopping onto the fluffy carpet with the softest of 'oofs', Mike presses up on the balls of his hands to kneel.

"Thank you," he says, glancing up at the girl. She's unmoving aside from the fingers tapping against her abdomen and the clear heaviness of her breaths. Mike sighs, tongue running over his lips for moisture, "Are you okay?"

"You lied to me."

"I didn't lie," he holds up a finger then, shuffling up onto his knees and dropping his hands down into his lap. His eyes widen, almost pleading, "I just didn't *tell* you."

Shaking her head in rebuttal, humming, "That's the same as lying." El stares down at the carpet, lips stretching out into a snarl, "You're not supposed to lie."

"El, look at me," Mike tries again, and when he reaches for her hand, she doesn't pull away. He's going to take that as a win, at least for now. Wrapping his entire hand around her wrist, the young man asks, "Look at me, please."

And she does, and he can *breathe* again.

"I didn't lie, but I'm sorry if you feel like I did." He can feel her try to retract her hand then, so he corrects himself, "I should have told you anyway and I'm sorry that I didn't."

"You had a party without me,"

Mike frowns, "I didn't *throw* the party."

"Still," the brunette shrugs, and she finally pulls her hand away to tuck it under her armpit as her arms fold over her chest. She sucks in her bottom lip for a moment, finding her words, "Why-" A pause, "why wasn't I invited?"

"I think Dustin thought it would have ruined the surprise."

(Well, here goes nothing.)

"What surprise?"

"El, he's moving out," Mike tells her, brown eyes darkening when he takes in the look of sheer confusion on her face, "so that you can move in." Her lips part, her eyes widen to the size of saucers, and suddenly Mike is almost rendered speechless, "Umm, you know, if you want to."

El doesn't say anything for a minute, instead choosing to tug on the sleeves of her flannel shirt, to gnaw at the inside of her cheeks with her teeth and just stare up at Mike. He can tell she needs to process what he's just said, so Mike moves to stand up on his feet then.

He stretches his arms out above his head, shoulders cracking just as she ushers, "You want to live with me?"

Unable to hide the grin that's threatening to spill out across his whole face, Mike doesn't even to fight it. He nods, eager and maybe even a little bit too keen, "Yeah. Like, *a lot*."

"You promise?"

"Have I ever not?"

El shrugs (*slowly*), and she purses her lips to mask a smile that Mike can just *feel*, "No."

"So?"

Now she's smiling, all toothy and bright despite it being the middle of the night, and she whispers an '*okay*,' so softly that Mike knows nothing is going to stop him from seeing her — his girl with the gentle smile and unruly curls — ever again.

He's always going to come home to her because no matter how far away she *seems*, **she's always in his heart.**